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operational experiences; field grade instructional and doctrinal studies; and finally Partridge?s flag grade leadership and innovation. The conclusion, drawn from a career spanning both World Wars and culminating in the Korean War, is that Partridge generally endorsed official doctrine as a training goal; a goal to be adjusted to meet the unique and unpredictable contextual demands of an explicit war scenario. Next, the writer evaluates Partridge?s leadership in the Korean War?the first to follow the National Security Act of 1947?where service doctrine, joint training and technology deficiencies demanded unprecedented compromise and innovation. The final section of the study illustrates the lessons learned by Partridge in the aftermath of the Korean War, lessons that are as valuable today as they were fifty years ago on the Peninsula where America and its allies fought Communist expansion.

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GENERAL EARLE E. PARTRIDGE, USAF:

Airpower Leadership in a Limited War

BY

DAVID H. GURNEY

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF

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Preface

Lieutenant Colonel David H. Gurney, USMC (BA, California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo) completed this study while serving as class leader of the seventh USAF School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS) course. His father was a West Point graduate and career USAF pilot, and his father's father was an Army Air Corps pilot and career United Airlines Captain. Lieutenant Colonel Gurney is an AV-8B Harrier pilot with over 4000 hours of flight time.

Lieutenant Colonel Gurney has completed three operational flying tours with Marine Attack Squadrons 211 (twice) and 311, as well as a single tour flying the OV-10A/D Bronco as a qualified FAC(A)/TAC(A) with Marine Observation Squadron Two. Additionally, he has served with the Third Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment as a Forward Air Controller and with the Naval Air Training Command as an intermediate and advanced strike flight instructor. During these assignments, he participated in numerous worldwide operations, both as the Harrier Detachment Commander aboard the USS Belleau Wood and land-based in the western Pacific. Lieutenant Colonel Gurney has filled billets as Squadron Executive Officer, Operations Officer, Aircraft Maintenance Officer, Director of Safety and Standardization, Intelligence Officer and Instructor Pilot. His next duty assignment will be on the General Staff of Marine Forces Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia.

Lieutenant Colonel Gurney's Professional Military Education includes Amphibious Intelligence Officer School, Amphibious Warfare School, Naval Postgraduate School

Aviation Safety Officer Certification, Marine Corps Command & Staff College, Air Command and Staff College, and the Naval War College. He is the 1988 recipient of the Naval War College Foundation Award.

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I would also like to thank Brigadier General I. B. Holley and Dr. Hal Winton for the generous gifts of their time over numerous dinners and private conversations which enriched my professional military education beyond description or value.

Finally, I acknowledge the heavy debt I owe to one of the greatest airmen to emerge from Annapolis, Dr. David Mets. Dr. Mets asked me to take on this project within five minutes of meeting me, and the subsequent blessings of his encyclopedic knowledge and first-hand experiences have fortified this Marine in the darkest doldrums of the Air University and Historical Research libraries. David Mets shares my father's uncanny knack for driving to the heart of any issue that I wish to segregate from the task at hand, and his sharp wit and unsinkable humor will stay with me always. Semper Fidelis!

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the career of General Earle Everard "Pat" Partridge, USAF, with a focus on the airpower lessons that inspired his craftsmanship of the first air campaign of the United States Air Force. The author separates Partridge's career into three sequential periods: company grade operational experiences; field grade instructional and doctrinal studies; and finally Partridge's flag grade leadership and innovation. The conclusion, drawn from a career spanning both World Wars and culminating in the Korean War, is that Partridge generally endorsed official doctrine as a training goal; a goal to be adjusted to meet the unique and unpredictable contextual demands of an explicit war scenario. Next, the writer evaluates Partridge's leadership in the Korean War—the first to follow the National Security Act of 1947—where service doctrine, joint training and technology deficiencies demanded unprecedented compromise and innovation. The final section of the study illustrates the lessons learned by Partridge in the aftermath of the Korean War, lessons that are as valuable today as they were fifty years ago on the Peninsula where America and its allies fought Communist expansion.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Three days after the North Koreans crossed the 38th parallel and began their rapid march south to Pusan, General Earle Everard "Pat" Partridge—in his capacity as acting commander of the Far East Air Force—joined General Douglas MacArthur's staff in Tokyo for a teletype conference with the Pentagon. To his astonishment, President Truman's decision to halt the communist advance in Korea was relayed with an order to deploy U.S. ground forces to South Korea. Surprise at the order was shared and given voice by General MacArthur as he repeated aloud: "I don't believe it . . . I can't understand . . .."[i] During the previous week, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and Joint Chiefs Chairman Omar Bradley had toured U.S. forces in the Far East and were well aware of the poor state of combat readiness in-theater. The U.S. had already—at Washington's direction—evacuated all civilians from Korea and withdrawn the few American military forces to Japan. Turning to Partridge, MacArthur asked: "Can the Fifth Air Force stop the North Korean columns?"

I didn't know what the situation looked like; I hadn't been over to Korea yet [since before the invasion]. He was asking me a question and I wouldn't commit myself. I re-

plied: "General, I don't know how big these columns are, where they are, or how well they're protected. So I would be reluctant to say that the Fifth Air Force can stop them. All I can say is that we will do our best."[ii]

Partridge's work was cut out for him. Possessing short-range jet fighters (F-80s) and battle-weary P-51s—some still bearing D-Day markings from the last war—he faced the prospect of contesting air superiority over the Korean peninsula from Japan. He nevertheless rapidly organized and led a remarkable combined air campaign that would reverse the North Korean advance and underscore some hard lessons for airpower. In implementing Air Force combat doctrine for the first time as an independent service, Partridge saw that contextual realities and the idiosyncratic nature of war would demand innovative tactics, techniques, procedures and strategies.

One difficulty in evaluating the influence of a single leader in the crucible of war is the problem of perspective—and not just that of the subject. General Partridge's approach to the dynamics of inter-service cooperation, doctrinal applications across service lines and operational efficiency is not one that most contemporary airmen can easily relate to. ***Who you are*** truly has a good deal to do with ***where you were when***. The predisposition to view Partridge's thoughts and actions through the lens of contemporary values, theory and doctrine is powerful. On the opening day of the Korean War, Partridge was a senior major general near his 32nd year of military service and a veteran of both world wars. He had flown nearly every type of aircraft that the Air Service, Air Corps and Air Force had ever acquired including; fighters, bombers, seaplanes and observation aircraft. Partridge was a man who had never seen the strategic sanctuary of limited war or the politics of casualty intolerance. Aviation assets and supporting technology lagged

significantly behind the dictates of theory and doctrine. Partridge, moreover, reserved judgment on some important elements of Air Corps Tactical School philosophy, which emphasized the strategic bombing mission of the Air Force. Perhaps Partridge's greatest challenge came from the rush to demobilize after World War Two and the paltry investment in tactical aviation and the infrastructure made by the Air Force after 1945. These factors would force Partridge to reinvent many wheels. It should be noted that each service branch enjoyed far greater autonomy than today, and the efficient prosecution of an air war was hobbled by a state of readiness far beneath that of the "hollow" US forces of the late 1970s.

Scope of the Study

This work will examine the life and career of General Pat Partridge from his enlistment in 1918 to his promotion to lieutenant general after the first year of the Korean War. Of greatest import will be an examination of the air campaign he directed as commanding general, Fifth Air Force during the first twelve months of the conflict. Partridge's subsequent promotion to four-star rank and service as Commanding General of the Far East Air Forces and then the North American Air Defense Command lie outside the scope of this study. The focus of this paper will not be the Korean War, the controversy over the control of aviation assets, or even the successes and failures of service doctrine. The emphasis of this thesis will be on Partridge himself; the perceptions, experiences and leadership actions that decisively influenced the direction and outcome of the Korean War. The focus on Partridge's perceptions will, to some degree, separate intent from outcome and combat capability from demand during the campaign in Korea. The lessons he took from

the war help to clarify a measure of the confusion and contradiction that feature so prominently in the few studies of that conflict, and along the way highlight compromises made in waging that war.

Pat Partridge was something of an anomaly in flag officer circles of power and (commonly) ego. He was not the type to engage in public posturing or confrontation and refrained from contradicting the assertions of inter-service detractors—other than to encourage scrutiny of the record. Unlike most generals and admirals who participated in the Korean War, his name is not found in the most popular encyclopedias of military biography, and no books exist which chronicle his career. Partridge himself felt that his story was not worth telling and he was surprised by requests for interviews from historians.[iii] Indeed, he was reluctant to get involved and somewhat impatient to swiftly conclude each of the six oral history interviews in which he participated (more than once in favor of golf). As a result, the accounts and biographies that directly or peripherally address his leadership in the Korean War tend to be dominated by the occasionally contrary opinions of more aggressive or prolific (in a literary sense) personalities of his day.

Much has been made of the antithetical views of two major ground force commanders over the quality and quantity of support that they received from Partridge's Fifth Air Force in Korea. On the one hand, Major General Walton Walker, Commanding General of the Eighth Army, sang Partridge's praises and asserted that he would have been forced off the peninsula without Fifth Air Force air support in his retreat to, and defense of, the Pusan Perimeter.[iv] Regrettably, Walker lost his life in a jeep accident north of Seoul following the Chinese intervention in late 1950 and his successor battled on relatively static lines. In contrast, Major General Edward Almond, Commanding General of X Corps and

an Air Corps Tactical School graduate, complained bitterly and vociferously over the failure of the Air Force to provide timely and reliable air support. Throughout his subsequent assignment commanding the Army War College, Almond spoke of his efforts in Korea "to use air support to the maximum":

This sometimes seemed too demanding to the [air] commander, especially General Pat Partridge, the Fifth Air Force Commander in Korea. The Air Force naturally liked to plan ahead and always liked the requests for their support to be in hand 24 hours or more before the action was to take place. To the infantryman and artilleryman, this is sometimes impossible. For example, at midnight of any night when the enemy is discovered, where will he be tomorrow? Who knows? Sometimes an air strike is required in 30 minutes—in the case of an enemy movement just discovered.[v]

It is not surprising that Partridge would be singled out, especially by Almond, since he served as the air component commander during the period of the greatest battlefield movement and airpower demand of the Korean War; from Pusan to the Chinese border and back to the 38th Parallel. Nevertheless, Almond's criticism and Partridge's perspective combine to produce useful lessons for airpower theorists and military professionals of all disciplines.

Preview of the Argument

General Partridge, as a West Pointer and a graduate of the Army's Command & General Staff College, was all too familiar with and generally sympathetic to complaints such as Almond's. The failure of airmen to adequately understand the concept of operations, scheme of maneuver, and fire support coordination requirements of ground forces has an

equal and opposite match in the weak grasp most ground commanders have of the capabilities and limitations of airpower. In this study, convictions regarding the employment of military aviation, and perceptual differences between ground force commanders in Korea will be addressed from Partridge's

perspective. This study is based on over one thousand pages of oral history transcripts and hours of audio tape that has yet to be transcribed, and is divided into four chapters. Chapter Two details Partridge's youth, West Point education, and career development leading to his assignment to the Air Corps Tactical School in 1936. Chapter Three examines his doctrinal views as an instructor at the Air Corps Tactical School and the effect that the World War II experience had upon refining his views. Chapter Four concludes the study by evaluating Partridge's work on the Air Staff during the birth of the modern US Air Force, his innovative efforts to secure victory in the Korean War, and the implications of his lessons and observations for airpower today.

Brigadier General "Pat" Partridge in North Africa, 1943

Chapter 2

The Development of an Airman

One day about 75 American airplanes went by, going someplace bombing. When you're a high private in the rear rank, all you know is that there's another load of rocks to carry around or KP to be done. So I didn't know what was going on, but I was intrigued by the combat flying that I saw—people once in awhile spiraling down with a dead engine and so on. I decided then that I wanted to fly. I hadn't had this feeling before, but I did then.

—General Earle E. Partridge

In October of 1918, near St. Mihiel on the Western Front, eighteen-year-old Private First Class Earle Everard "Pat" Partridge began an aviation quest that would become a remarkable lifestyle and produce an even more remarkable career. Soft-spoken, self-effacing and endowed with natural leadership skills from his earliest days, Partridge deftly navigated the opportunities, challenges and tragedies of his career in the same way that he survived the riskiest years of aviation—by the seat of his pants. Unlike many early aviators, he was not a romantic, a gambler, or a dreamer. Earle Partridge was a sober pragmatist and an intuitive mathematician who yearned for, and embraced, both adventure and responsibility. The pursuit of these objectives led to a series of challenging operational assignments which superbly prepared him for the leadership opportunity that

he came to view as the greatest contribution of his career and life: commander of the Fifth Air Force in the Korean Conflict.[vi] It may be wrong to suggest that the apparently fortuitous emergence of exceptional personalities at critical moments in history has preserved nations from all manner of calamity, but the example of Earle Partridge tends to perpetuate such concepts.

The Early Years

If greatness is indeed a complex function of nature and nurture, few clues to the destiny of Pat Partridge are evident in the circumstances of his early years. Born on July 7, 1900, in Winchendon, Massachusetts, a town 50 miles northwest of Boston, he was raised in the predominantly agricultural village of Ashby, 18 miles from Winchendon. The son of a hotel manager, at age 15 his mother suddenly died of a stroke and both he and his father moved into the combination hotel and tavern that his grandparents ran in town. Partridge observed that he was "just like any other kid in the neighborhood,"[vii] running errands for the family business, digging dandelions, picking berries and flying kites. Although the death of his mother was difficult for him, he later minimized its effect with the observation that "youngsters get busy doing something and forget about their troubles."[viii] Aside from his mother, no single individual had a major influence in his formative years. To the end of his days, religion featured minimally as an influence.[ix]

With a population of less than 1,000, Partridge's hometown of Ashby was too rural for a train station, and a horse and buggy was the primary means of conveyance. On one memorable occasion in 1912, he traveled via buckboard to Winchendon to commemorate an anniversary of the city's founding. As part of the celebration, the city arranged for an

aviator from New York to make three demonstration flights of his biplane for the citizens. Unfortunately, his locally purchased fuel was an inferior grade and, despite the fact that his engine coughed and wheezed profusely, he attempted to launch from *inside* a local baseball park. Beginning his takeoff roll from right field and proceeding diagonally towards the left field at an altitude of three feet, the pilot was unable to clear the shrubbery forming the fence and the impact shredded his prop in every direction. Two days later, with a new prop and a supply of higher octane gasoline sent up from New York, the airman made his three contracted flights: the first alone and the others with a thrilled passenger; skimming the bushes each time as he exited the ball park.[x]

In 1912, aviation was still more of a stunt than practical transportation and Partridge continued his primary and secondary education with only the rarest glimpse of, or interest in, aircraft. This cannot be said for the romantic lure of military adventure however. When America entered World War I, he attempted to enlist with the 26th Division before they left for France, but was turned away for being too young. Encouraged by his family, which had no military connections, to stay in school, he continued his high school education with the intention of attending Harvard, MIT, or Worcester Tech upon graduation.

Unfortunately for Partridge, Ashby's high school was not accredited. Virtually every college and university of the day screened prospective students lacking an accredited high school diploma with entrance examinations. Partridge had attended all twelve years of school in the same building and no previous graduate had ever gone on to college. In June, 1917, he was one of three boys in a total graduating class of seventeen. After failing to pass the Worcester Tech entrance examination, he moved to Fitchburg for a fifth year of high school in hopes of raising his examination scores. During this additional

year of high school, Partridge realized that he couldn't afford the tuition for any civilian university and he pinned his hopes upon passing the entrance examination for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Economic reasons alone commended West Point to his mind. When he nevertheless failed to qualify for admission in June of 1918, economics and the war in Europe inspired military enlistment over a career in the hotel business.

World War I

In July of 1918, Partridge joined the Army in search of employment and adventure, but not necessarily combat.[xi] Although he hoped to enlist in the Army Air Service in order to become an aircraft mechanic, no slots were available. The recruiter suggested that the next best thing for a young man interested in science and mechanics would be "the engineers, and there are plenty of openings."[xii] (For good reason.) Far from receiving technical training, Partridge found that after two months of "physical conditioning" and instruction in basic military skills he would be sent to France as a replacement for the 304th Engineer Regiment. Being a replacement meant that he would be sent to war without the companionship and camaraderie that fortified other teenagers with similar fates. Partridge recollected crossing the Atlantic on a very small British freighter as "a trying experience":

We zigzagged back and forth for fourteen days going across. We had canvas hammocks that we slung at night and took down in the daytime. The food was the worst; it was terrible. I had one bath in two weeks. My first experience under fire was in the convoy; we were almost in sight of Land's End when a submarine torpedoed a ship—it looked like it was 100 feet away, but it was . . . three quarters of a mile, maybe. I hap-

pened to be standing on that side and saw the torpedo going, and it made a hit right smack in the middle. We moved along you see, then they were depth-charging behind us.[xiii]

Upon arriving at the front, Partridge found life to be more comfortable and relatively safe, but still rigorous. Instead of the work that he expected when enlisting, digging ditches, working on roads and other manual labor dominated his duties. Though occasionally subjected to long range artillery and machine gun fire, he was never exposed to aerial bombardment, nor was he close enough to the battle area to view combat directly (other than that of the aerial variety). He did however see balloons being attacked or shot down and large formations engaged in combat flying. As a consequence, Partridge considered his short months in France "an interesting and useful experience" and he resolved to one day become an Army aviator. Even so, the terribly-wounded who were evacuated left him with a profound impression: "What I came away with, was that there are some things [in life] that are awfully important, and then there's a lot of fluff that people pay attention to that is not important at all. How you dress, what movie you see and so on seems very important to some people."[xiv]

This is not to say that Partridge's experience at the front was free of "fluff." During the last few hours of the war, he found himself located alongside an American 75mm gun battery. The artillerymen called out to members of his unit: "Come on, you can shoot a shell the last day of the war if you want to. Go down to the foot of the hill, pick up a shell, and bring it up and we'll fire it for you." Partridge reported that it was a surreal episode and that "a lot of people did. I didn't; I was too tired." On the evening of November 11th, he witnessed a fireworks display "that exceeded anything anybody had ever seen." Four

months later, after being withdrawn from the front and anticipating redeployment home in April of 1919, Partridge participated in a final bit of ceremony that left him with a strong and lasting impression of professional dignity and military bearing. During a division review, General John Pershing trooped the miles long line of 20,000 men and "came close enough so that you could really get a good look at him. He's the finest looking soldier I ever saw in my life. I never heard a word said in criticism of him."[xv] But this marked the last major event of his World War One experience and the time had come to go home.

College

Upon returning to Massachusetts after less than eleven months' service and an honorable discharge, Partridge was pleased to learn that four of his former classmates had done so well in college that his high school had been accredited while he was in France. No longer obligated to endure entrance exams that he couldn't pass, he took the small sum of money he had earned in the Army and left for Northfield Vermont, where he enrolled at Norwich University and joined its ROTC unit. Partridge was amazed that the cavalry ROTC unit was "still talking about riding horses up the hill against the enemy" as though World War I had not taken place. "They were teaching tactics that would have been good against the Indians, but not much good against the Germans . . . machine guns . . . and barbed wire defensive positions that I had seen."[xvi] Nevertheless, Partridge enjoyed the horseback riding and was elected President of the freshman class.

As the end of his freshman year approached, Partridge's father learned that if his son re-enlisted with the station complement at West Point, he could secure a direct appointment on the basis of his newly accredited high school degree. It isn't clear how

much the elder Partridge was assisting with financial support of his son at Norwich, but for reasons of his own, he didn't notify young Partridge of the opportunity directly. Instead, he raised the issue with the commandant of cadets at Norwich, who in turn counseled young Partridge without mentioning his father. Partridge sensed his father's involvement, and with the endorsement of his colonel, traveled to New York in late June and enlisted just prior to July 1st. On August 4, 1920, Partridge was sworn in as a cadet and had, in fact, been with the other cadets continuously since his arrival.

Although he excelled at West Point, Partridge insists that he had no thoughts of a military career at this point—or even later—in his commissioned service. His first priority was to get an education and his second was to become an Army flyer. "All the time I was at West Point, I was interested in flying. We had a few chances to fly as passengers—the summer vacations—and the Air Service came with Jennies and DH's and gave us rides. So I did have several chances to fly."[xvii]

Only a few of the instructors at the academy were aviators and the capabilities and limitations of the Air Service received the most cursory treatment, mostly as it related to battlefield observation: "Airpower they paid little attention to, if any."[xviii] His lack of career interest notwithstanding, the associations Partridge made at West Point would figure prominently in his later career. Faculty members from the Superintendent (Douglas MacArthur) to the Athletic Director (Matthew Ridgway), to fellow members of his company (Hoyt Vandenberg) read like a "Who's Who" of U.S. military history. The large numbers of faculty and classmates from this period who found themselves working together on the Korean peninsula thirty years later is astonishing. "We all end up in a heap over in Korea."[xix]

In his senior year at West Point, Partridge obtained a copy of William Bishop's *Winged Warfare*, and taught himself to type by copying the book several times. Partridge was impressed by Bishop's predictions of "faster airplanes, better armament and faster flying guns."[xx] Still more impressive was the day when an SE-5 fighter was landed on the campus plain: "The trees weren't as high as they are now, but it was still a pretty good feat to land in there." He didn't know it at the time, but soon he would be practicing "strange field landings" himself and putting aircraft down in far more treacherous locales. More than ever, he wanted to fly and pushed hard for the Air Service when the time came for branch selection. Partridge's academic discipline and quiet deportment helped him to graduate sixth in the class of 1924, and like 59 of his classmates, he received orders to primary flight training at Brooks Field in San Antonio, Texas.

Brooks and Kelly Fields

If flight training was hard on second lieutenants in 1924, it was far tougher for more senior officers. Immediately after WW-I, the Army transferred a large number of officers into the burgeoning Air Service from combat arms branches such as the Cavalry. The transfers reached a peak in 1920-21 and had a profoundly negative impact on those who had been aviators from their earliest days in the Army and now found themselves junior to some of the newest arrivals. "These [senior officers from other branches] became professional commanding officers and they weren't very air-minded because they hadn't grown up with aviation. They didn't have any experience. A few were extremely good, but most of them were a real drug on the market—mediocre—to say the best you can for them. But you couldn't get rid of the terrible ones; there wasn't any way."[xxi] Within a few years, the attitude of the young flight instructors in San Antonio towards

senior officer students had commensurately soured. "The instructors were determined that we weren't going to get a bunch of high-ranking officers transferred from the rest of the Army into the Air Service to take command of bases and stations and squadrons."[xxii] Partridge soon found that this "strange, but understandable" attitude wasn't limited to senior officers: "They didn't want a lot of West Pointers in the Air Service either. So we [his West Point graduating class] started with 60; we had 30 go over to Kelly Field [for advanced training] and 15 of those graduated the next August."[xxiii]

At Kelly Field we operated the 3rd Attack Group—had 75 DH's—and we operated a flying school that had about 210 or 220 airplanes of different sorts. Then, across the road—just a short distance away—was the depot, and they were always testing airplanes. We flew them, and we had two patterns for Kelly Field. When I mentioned this to a dining-in at the academy one time they looked at me like I'd lost my mind (laughter). They'd ask, "How did you regulate the traffic?" I'd say, "We didn't have any radio—and so you didn't need any tower." They had a "T" out in front of the operations office and the man would run out and turn it around once in a while, and that's all the traffic control we had.

Although a large percentage of students failed to earn their wings (due to instructor caprice in Partridge's view), this did not stigmatize their careers and he found himself working with many of them throughout his military service. However, one couldn't say that those officers who were returned to other combat arms branches continued to harbor fond memories of the Air Service and its officers. Attitudes ranged from benevolence to indifference to outright hostility—a hostility that was fanned by flight

pay.[xxiv] In 1924 Partridge earned $125.00 monthly base pay, $15.00 for rations, $25.00 (as a bachelor) for quarters and an additional 50% of his base pay as "flying pay." The aviators who had WW-I flying experience received 75% of base salary as flight pay. Issues such as these, when combined with Army tradition, competition for resources and the increasing isolation of Air Service bases and officers contributed to a perceptual rift which threaded its way throughout Partridge's career. "Very few Army [ground] officers took the trouble to find out about the Air Corps and how it could be used and so on. This was true right up to the Korean War."[xxv] Nevertheless, Partridge and his contemporaries in the Air Service saw themselves as Army officers and never felt treated as second-class citizens by non-Air Service officers.

In some respects, those who washed out of the flight program were lucky. Partridge recalled that the aviation mishap rate when he completed flight school was in the neighborhood of 580 per 100,000 flight hours (as opposed to 1.37 today).[xxvi] Partridge's roommate, "who was probably the best pilot in the class"[xxvii] was killed in a spin. "People used to spin in and burn in those things [the Jenny] all too frequently. I would hate to say how many, but a great many. Then we had collisions in the air . . . we lost quite a few people doing that. We started wearing parachutes in 1924; at least I did anyway, when we shifted from Brooks to Kelly Field."[xxviii] Though a new regulation required their wear, not everybody would don the cumbersome seat pack parachutes. One of the mid-air collisions that took place shortly after Partridge arrived at Kelly Field for advanced training was between his flight school classmates; Charles D. McAllister and Charles A. Lindbergh. Both bailed out and both survived—one to prominence. In an ironic twist of fate, the death of Partridge's Brooks Field primary flight instructor, Fred I.

Patrick (for whom the Barksdale AFB Officer's Club is named) would—less than a decade later—save his own life:

When the P-26's came to my squadron at Selfridge—this is about 1933 or 1934—they also came to Barksdale. And Patrick, who could fly like crazy and loved it, was flying one day; one of the early models. He ran out of gas on one tank—they had two tanks, one under each wing—and he landed in a plowed field. The airplane went over on its back and the aircraft didn't have any superstructure—turnover structure. He was killed. So a change took place; they put a turnover structure in all the P-26's just because of that accident. One day I came in and landed after a gunnery mission . . . and here went the left wheel. I saw it go because when you first touch down, it gets an extra spin and runs out in front—I knew that I wasn't long for being right side up. I guess I went over at 50 or 55 miles an hour, and over pretty hard ground. I held the wing up maybe two or three seconds and—as it lost flying speed—that side went down and the airplane went straight over. It saved my neck; the structure was strong enough that when it went over it hit on the structure. It didn't even hit on the tail. I'd bumped my head—that's all. It's incredible.[xxix]

Although the Billy Mitchell controversy was in full swing and the aircraft which made the first round-the-world flight returned to San Antonio during this period, neither current events nor mishaps could distract him from his from his studies. "We were in the difficult position of having to learn to fly—I'm talking about myself and my contemporaries—and what was going on in Washington was something else again." This attitude ensured that Partridge would find his name among the 15 members of his West Point

class to earn their wings straight out of the academy, and one of only three who would report to the 3rd Attack Group in 1925:

They just had four sections in the flying school: fighters, observation, attack, and bombardment. Everybody was encouraged to visit up and down the [flight] line and fly the various airplanes; you could fly any airplane that was there. If it was a two-seater or more, you got some dual, but otherwise, if it was a fighter, you'd just get in and fly away. It was that simple. Just why they had attack airplanes, I don't know. But there wasn't much future for a bomber once anti-aircraft got working on them. They flew too slow.[xxx]

At this time, there were only three combat aircraft groups in the Army Air Service: the 1st Pursuit Group (Selfridge Field); the 2nd Bombardment Group (Langley Field) and the 3rd Attack Group. Unlike the others, the 3rd Attack Group was located right there at Kelly Field. Unlike today, the squadron's tactical doctrine came not from books or manuals, but in a form less enduring:

Mostly word of mouth. In the Attack Group, the doctrine was to fly as low as possible so you'd get up to your target with surprise. We flew in three-ship formations and if we wanted to have a big formation, we sometimes had 12 airplanes. I might tell you that that's about all the pilots we could muster in the 3rd Attack Group of three squadrons.[xxxi]

At the time, Partridge was flying two-seat DH-4's, called "flaming coffins" ("for good reasons").[xxxii] Partridge considered the DH's fast, as they were able to cruise at between 90 and 95 knots unless they were burdened with 400 lbs. of bombs and four .50 caliber machine guns. The tires were large and the pilots thought nothing of landing in a

plowed field—especially since the aircraft carried a spare tire underneath the wing. Partridge saw the attack role as being a close adjunct to the Army and was involved in live fire demonstrations for the Army at Fort Sill in 1925. In fact, actual "maneuvers were few and far between. There was a lack of money, lack of range, and lack of interest."[xxxiii] At no other time during his one-year tour of duty with the 3rd Attack Group did Partridge have any professional exposure to the ground Army.

Socially we knew a lot of them. We played golf with them or tennis or football. So we ran into [ground Army] people at parties and so on, but as for getting together to talk tactics, no. I didn't think that they were paying much attention to us. We were sort of outcasts a little bit. They pretended not to care, but they were jealous of the flying pay business. This was a bone of contention all through the years.[xxxiv]

If Partridge had little operational interaction with the ground Army, this didn't dampen his enthusiasm to perfect the skills that would be used in its support. Keen to fire machine guns and drop bombs at every opportunity (mostly because it was fun), Partridge found that few others shared his enthusiasm: "Hardly anybody else in the Air Force was interested in shooting; there were just a few zealots around." He found that he was good at it and he practiced a lot. In 1926, Partridge won the annual Air Service Machine Gun and Bombing Contest held at Langley Field. "Since I had a good chance to practice, and I liked to shoot anyway, and I could do a lot of dry diving—it was all forward guns and mostly at ground targets and you won or lost on the ground targets—I was able to win the first year." Partridge would also win in 1927 and 1928. He was awarded the Distin-

guished Aerial Gunner's Medal for his achievement, but was also prohibited from participating in future competitions.[xxxv]

In 1926 the 3rd Attack Group moved to Fort Crocker (near Galveston) to avoid the congestion caused by the increase in advanced flight training at Kelly Field. Because of the high attrition noted earlier, the Air Corps allowed the flying school to reclaim Partridge and two other second lieutenants for flight instructor duty when the 3rd left town. Partridge, with only ten months of operational squadron experience, now found himself to be an advanced flight instructor in an era of instructor prerogative. "I was given students; four, or six, or seven, or whatever it was per class. They were my responsibility and I was going to get them through that flying school or else, and I had awful good luck. Some of the instructors seemed to have the attitude: 'Well, these are young people and they're just going to have to prove that they can fly.' This eliminated a lot of students, I'll tell you." Despite the new responsibilities, Partridge still made time for his bombing and gunnery practice:

When I was transferred back to the flying school, I got the armament officer to fit out a DH with a gun and a sight, which he made out of a rod and just open sights—no telescope or anything. I won the next two years with that kind of equipment, but there again, I had a chance to practice at the flying school as much as I wanted to. Very few people had the time, or the equipment, or the opportunity to do that. And money was short.[xxxvi]

Life as a flight instructor was very different for Partridge than for instructors today. There were no radios and no electronic equipment of any kind. There was no instrument flying. Landing an aircraft safely was the greatest single challenge of flight

school. He was permitted to train students in any way he thought effective; handing his students to another instructor for check-ride evaluations when he considered them ready to move on to the next stage. Instructors and students were permitted to have aircraft mishaps without repercussion, unless unusual incompetence was suspected, and aircraft crew chiefs "always rode in the airplane—they were two-seaters. And they are damn well interested; they worked hard. So our mechanical standards were extremely high—for those days."[xxxvii] One of Partridge's favorite crew chiefs was actually illiterate:

He was a fine east Texas woodsman, but he never bothered to learn to read. They had some technical instructions—even in those days—that he should have read, but he didn't, and he just did what they told him to. He kept the airplane clean; he cranked it. In those days we had to crank them by propeller—prop 'em—never had any trouble; flew hundreds of hours with this airplane.[xxxviii]

The initial two or three months of advanced training were devoted to teaching primary students how to fly the DeHavilland. Afterwards, military flight applications and refinement of "air sense" was supervised by instructors who specialized in particular stages of training. For his part, Partridge was in charge of the "strange field landings" stage. "Every day you get about six or eight students—whatever you could handle. You'd talk to them for a few minutes and say: 'Now follow me, we're going out and land in a big field, and then a middle-size field, and then another with a tree in it, and then one with a well in it—an open well—and we're going to land on a hillside.' A large field would be a half-mile long and a medium field would be approximately a quarter mile.

'I'll try to do it right, and then you come in and land alongside my airplane.'" The final two stages before graduation and pilot's wings were gunnery and bombing.

In other words, I was largely running things myself since graduating from the flying school and it was extremely interesting; I enjoyed it. I kept on running things in one way or another right on through my career. Being an operations officer, you're really in charge of things, telling people what to do and so on. Somehow I'd always get stuck into this kind of a job. Once in a while, I'd be the adjutant for a period, and back I'd go into operations again. I never gave career a thought. I was just going on with what I was doing and having fun at it. That may sound like a strange statement. I never was in the career business. I just took whatever assignment came along and did it as well as I could. Have as much fun as you can on the side or in doing it. This is so different from things today. Everybody is looking at their next assignment.[xxxix]

West Point

Partridge's next assignment was one that he accepted with no small amount of reluctance. In September 1929, he was ordered back to West Point to assume duties as a faculty member. "'Send us a warm body with these characteristics.' That's the way I think it happened because I had no special qualifications. I went back there protesting." On arrival, Partridge wasn't surprised to see that airpower was still not part of the curriculum—outside of engineering aerodynamics: "Nobody thought much about air."[xl] Nevertheless, Partridge was able to keep his hand in flying; both at the academy and by making a five-to-six hour drive to Mitchel Field on Long Island. At West Point itself, in a hangar on the Hudson river, the academy maintained a two-seat Loening Amphibian

which he flew a great deal: "The football coaches seemed to be heavy-handed. They'd hit a log in the river or they'd hit and bounce and split the hull open." During scheduled—and unscheduled—maintenance, he'd trek to Mitchel Field, where the only aircraft available for him to fly were PT-1's and ("if I was lucky") PT-3's.

At the beginning of his second year as a math instructor under Colonel Charles P. Echols, providence smiled on Partridge:

Major General William R. Smith came up the second year I was there [to be Superintendent] and he was a bluff old fellow. He made a speech to all the instructors, saying: 'You've been chosen to be here and if there's anybody who doesn't want to be here, if you'll just let us know who, we'll see that you get moved away.' He had hardly gotten back to his office before I was right there to interview him and say, 'I'm the fellow you were talking about.' Then he wouldn't let me go! He wouldn't let me go until I found a replacement from the Air Service. But I didn't have any trouble with that.[xli]

France Field, Panama

Even though First Lieutenant Partridge had been sending his annual future assignment preferences postcard to the Army Personnel branch with the Philippines consistently listed at the top, in late 1930 he was dispatched to France Field Panama, for a two-year assignment. The 6th Composite Group" at France Field incorporated a fighter squadron, a bomber squadron and an observation squadron. "I was first put in the 7th Observation Squadron, then the group headquarters, and then the fighter unit." Partridge's experience was that airmen were expected to be prepared to assume any job and to fly any of the composite group's aircraft. "I never got into supply or maintenance or that sort of

thing. But I'd become squadron operations officer, or base operations officer, accident investigation officer, gunnery officer and tow target chief." Thanks to the far-sighted leadership of the Army commander, Major General Preston Brown, Partridge learned important airpower lessons in the Canal Zone:

We just assumed that the ground forces would be under attack unless we did something about it. His idea was, let's find out how to shoot at these things in the air. He said, 'Every person in the Canal Zone will take some kind of course in anti-aircraft fire.' This meant that somebody had to tow the targets endlessly. He made everybody shoot. Units with antiaircraft artillery shot at high altitudes like 12,000 feet. The ones who didn't—who just had small arms or machine guns or whatever—they all had to get out there and fire on the sleeve. Let me tell you, he kept track of what was going on too. He was out watching them; he was keeping score. I towed targets until I was black in the face. I was the station operations officer and we sent off missions day after day; I've never seen anything like it. He foresaw the fact that airplanes were going to play a big part in any future war and he did his level best to get everybody ready. The Army didn't like him; he was too abrupt, too sure of himself, and too right. He saw that it would be an awfully good idea if the Army air and Navy air people could see each other operate. So Army air was sent out—I was one of the first to go—to a carrier. We got a ride on a carrier, got catapulted off and brought back in again on maneuvers. We went up and we got confused in the clouds and then we inadvertently dive-bombed our own fleet, just worked it over good from one end to the other (laughter).[xlii]

At this time, the US Marine Corps was involved in Nicaragua and Partridge visited the Marines, spoke to their pilots, and observed their operations:

One day they said: 'Hey why don't you go up on a ride with us?' So off we went in a Ford Trimotor—no seats, no benches, nothing—an old Ford and it held twelve, fifteen people. This was a supply mission and they were taking in troops—Marines—one or two and a whole bunch, maybe five or six National Guardsmen, and a pile of shoes that smelled to high heavens. Everywhere we'd land, three of four times during the day there would be guards all around the airfield. They were doing a fine job with their air. They had the first Corsairs. A Marine first lieutenant, Frank Schilt, got the Medal of Honor for making repeated landings in a little street in a village where there was a hell of a battle going on and people kept shooting at him. But he went in, I think a dozen times, taking out wounded. They were mostly doing observation work with the Corsairs and supply work with the Fords. There was a good deal of socializing between the air and ground forces and the Navy. I lived in open-air quarters on the east side of France Field. The Navy had a base right alongside. Some of the friends I made there are still good friends.[xliii]

Selfridge Field

Although Partridge's two years in Panama were pleasant and rewarding, life was about to get even better. In December 1932, he was transferred to Selfridge Field and assumed command of the 94th Squadron of the First Pursuit Group. The squadron had just received a full complement of two-seat P-16 fighters: "It's a biplane with a gull wing topside and a Curtiss V-1570 engine, and the gunner sat looking backwards so that he

could shoot people coming up from the rear. We never did shoot anybody, but the plane was [not] delightfully built. Put the brakes on too hard, and it would go right over on its back." Despite the deficiencies of the materiel, it was a compliment to receive one of the very few field commands in the Air Corps as a first lieutenant: "You must understand that we pretty well knew everybody. Even when you get up into the 1935 period, I don't believe there were more than 1200 or 1500 [total officers in the Air Corps]. If you'd been around the flying school, if you'd been around the Air Corps Tactical School, you'd seen or knew of practically every one of them."[xliv]

This fact probably accounts for why First Lieutenant Partridge was given a command before others with greater seniority. His devotion to combat skills training had not gone unnoticed. Only with the establishment of the General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force in 1935 was there any type of operational evaluation for squadrons at all (they became known as "quarterly operational tests"). While other fighter squadrons kept their machine guns in the armory covered with cosmoline, Partridge was one of the few who insisted that his aircraft be maintained in a combat-ready state. "The GHQ realized that people around the country in combat units were just using the airplanes for cross-country flying and keeping them as light as they could for baggage, and maintaining them as easily as possible."[xlv] When exercising the guns, Partridge required his aircrew to periodically fire all their ammunition in a single continuous pass to detect any weapons that might be prone to jam. "In those days, we pretty much operated on our own initiative." Taking the initiative, Partridge's squadron conducted regular bombing and strafing exercises at the Oscota range off Lake Huron in Michigan. The unit developed an appropriate reputation for competence.

Aside from helping the corps area commander in Chicago (Major General Frank Parker) with annual Army Aid Society fund drives, Partridge once again found himself in an assignment with no real contact with the ground Army. In fact, at a time when Germany had begun to develop a potent air force of its own, the Army Air Corps gave as little thought to aviation developments outside US borders as it did to the infantry. This was the Depression, but for airmen at Selfridge, it was far from depressing: "It was a good time for us; we had money. I bought more things—furniture, automobiles, and things like that—in those depression years at Selfridge than I ever bought in any similar period. We got paid in cash and this was very good for us economically."[xlvi]

In early 1934, Partridge requested a transfer to the Air Corps Tactical School "because I thought that they were doing some things that I would like to know more about." Instead, he found himself sent for a short course at the navigation school at Langley Field in January. The Air Corps had established the school for bomber pilots and commissioned the navigator of the Wiley Post around-the-world-flight to supervise the curriculum.[xlvii] Halfway through the course of instruction, Partridge and his entire class were reassigned to fly air mail after the Chief of the Air Corps, Major General Benjamin Foulois, volunteered their services to President Roosevelt. The school was summarily closed, but was reopened later in San Diego. Partridge recalled that the air mail mission was the most chaotic and mismanaged operation that he had ever seen. He found himself ordered to fly aircraft that he had never flown before, in poor weather and to unusual destinations on a moment's notice:

Then one day I was just ordered to fly to Columbus, Ohio, just like that, by way of Indianapolis or something. In the middle of the night, off I went in some other kind of

airplane, and it landed in Columbus. H. H. George was there and said, "Get out. This is as far as you're going." I said, "I'm supposed to go to Cleveland." He said: "I don't care where you're supposed to go, you're going to be my operations officer right here." How can you have an organization run like that? But they took people and sent them and anybody could pick anybody and say "Come with me" and away they went. They never did get it organized, not in all the time they were in it.[xlviii]

Before long, Partridge made his way back to Selfridge Field and was given command of another fighter squadron—this time the 27th. Promoted to captain in 1935, his operations officer was a First Lieutenant (later, General) Emmett "Rosie" O'Donnell, who would leave for between four and five months each year to coach in the West Point football program. Partridge was pleased to take delivery of a low wing monoplane called the P-26, since "anything was an improvement over the P-16."[xlix] Unfortunately, this aircraft had poor brakes and a forward center of gravity which produced an embarrassing moment at Barksdale Field: "I looked up and there was a telegraph pole right in front of me. I wasn't going very fast. Instinctively, I hit the brakes and the tail went up, and the propeller dug into the ground, and there I sat in embarrassment, standing on the nose and the wheels." Partridge remembers this period as a time when the Air Corps began to have "quite a few" serious maneuvers. One, organized by Claire Chennault, pitted bomber forces at Wright Field against his fighter squadron (and others) at Bowman Field in Louisville. The target was Fort Knox and bombers were faster than the fighters, but "everybody tried their best to make it as real as possible."[l]

Partridge completed his tour at Selfridge in 1936, running operations at the First Fighter Group Headquarters after relinquishing his second command. Even in the fighter group, he didn't characterize himself as a fighter pilot: "I flew whatever came along and liked it, be it a Ford Trimotor, or an amphibian, or a bomber, or whatever. But, I think we had more fun in the fighters."[li] While happy to finally have the orders to Maxwell Field that he had requested in 1934, Partridge was in for an 80-day surprise:

One of our three generals, in this case Brigadier General Augistine Robins, knew something about me. I don't know if somebody bugged his ear or what, but several times he suggested to me that I come down to Wright Field and go into the flight test section. I demurred, saying, "Look, I'm at Selfridge; I'm in the fighter business; I like it; I've got a squadron" and so on. Finally, to my complete surprise, after I got orders to the Tactical School, I got another set of orders saying "You will report for temporary duty on such and such a day," which was almost the day after tomorrow.[lii]

Although Partridge immensely enjoyed his test pilot duties in Dayton Ohio, he considered himself too old to switch to experimental test flying. His immediate goals were to attend the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS) and go on to Fort Leavenworth for Command and General Staff College (CGSC). This would make him 38 years old before he could return to Wright Field, and though he liked Robins very much, he "just wanted to go the operational route." But he took many valuable lessons from his short stint at Wright Field and was exposed to test aircraft of every variety, from the P-30 to the B-17, the Boeing 247 (which vibrated apart), the P-31, the C-32 and the P-37. If the aircraft were new, the approach to them was the same as ever:

This is another example of the free and easy way. I was a test pilot, you see; I had never been in the DC-2 in my life. The test pilot, who was a great big strong man said, "Hey, I need a copilot; we're going to do the landing tests on the C-32." I said: "Frank, I've never flown one of these things in my life." He said, "That doesn't make any difference, come on." So off we went. And it was loaded with lead to have the right load, just great bags of lead shot all the way up and down the thing. The trick was to make a landing in front of the cameras and stop in a certain distance to see if the airplane was fulfilling its technical requirements. Well I thought that he was going to break this thing into two or maybe seven pieces! He came on with power and pulled up the nose and shut off the power! He was still 20 or 30 feet in the air and gosh, the thing went "rrrrrrr bam!" He'd taxi back and take off from the turf field again. When we were done, instead of taxiing over to the hangar, off we went again (laughter). He said to me: "Here, you take it." I flew around, made two or three landings and taxied in. I'm a DC-2 pilot![liii]

Conclusion

Captain Partridge arrived at Maxwell Field in the summer of 1936 with more flight time in more different types of aircraft than most aviators today accrue in a lifetime. In a laissez faire "flying club" environment fraught with risk, Partridge was a non-flamboyant leader who emphasized combat readiness skills for both professional and hedonistic reasons. His natural prowess as an airman, his efficiency as an operations officer and his attentive, unassuming personal demeanor established his professional reputation early and reinforced it often. Partridge wasn't a drinker, a smoker, or a gambler; he didn't use profanity and he was not religious. He enjoyed squash, golf, and small game hunting.

His adventurous spirit and a genuine love of flying influenced every career decision he made. He sought professional longevity only to prolong the opportunity to fly.

In the twelve years after leaving West Point, Partridge thrived in an environment of adaptation, flexibility, and experimentation. What he knew of airpower theory and doctrine was cursory; mostly word of mouth and observation. Although he was about to embark upon his first academic evaluation of airpower and its proper place in combined arms warfare, his experiences from 1924 to 1936 remained his guide until retirement. The innovation and flexibility that he exercised so often and visibly during the Korean War was born and nurtured during the formative period of his career when the Air Corps contrasted so sharply with the more traditional ground Army. In a Partridge statement recorded in May of 1951, the unique character of Partridge's early experience in the Air Corps is clearly recognizable: "We can do anything over here that we can dream of. We take ideas and try them out. If they work, we use them. If they don't work, we throw them away and start over."[liv] This is not a statement that could be attributed to any Army commander in the Korean War, and certainly not to General Almond.

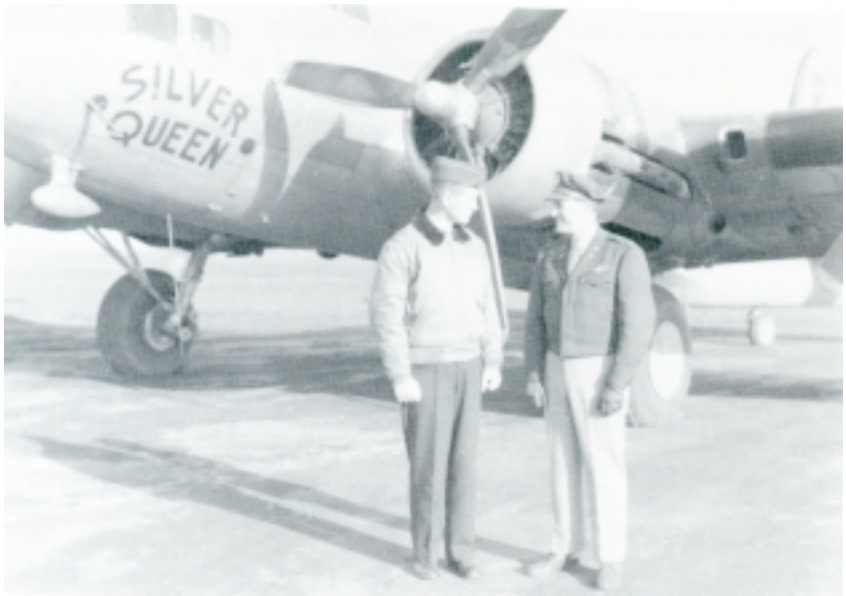
Chapter 3

The Doctrinal Views of an Airman

There was always an argument at Maxwell Field between the bombardment section and the pursuit section. Finally, I got a hold of an old friend named Snavely [later, Brigadier General Ralph A.] and said, "Well how much protection do you think you're

going to need to keep the enemy fighters off your tail when you're flying those bombers?" He said, "All I can get." Other people were saying, "We can handle them with our flexible guns from the rear." The fighter boys just didn't believe that at all, and the bomber people finally came around to the point they realized they had to have fighter protection. There wasn't any other way to survive.

—General Earle E. Partridge



Major General Partridge (left) with Colonel Robert Landry, commander of the 493rd Bomb Group in England, 2 March 1945

Professional Education

If Partridge's operational years played an important role in predisposing him to accept risk and experiment with airpower, then his advanced studies at Maxwell Field and

combat experiences in World War II reinforced the principles of war and taught him to evaluate each challenge independently and pragmatically.

In August of 1936, Partridge arrived in Montgomery Alabama to begin his student year at the Army Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS). It was then run by Colonel Pratt and the vice commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur G. Fisher (subsequently killed in an aviation mishap while en route to Honolulu to evaluate the 1941 surprise attack). "Fisher was very well educated in the military system and had been to the Naval War College. He insisted on having Air Force officers know something about the Navy—so he gave a course on naval warfare."[lv] According to Partridge, ACTS had a two-fold mission: "One was to get Air Force people ready to go to the Command and General Staff School. The other was to teach them something about the air arm, tactics, and so on."[lvi] Although ACTS educated officers from the artillery, infantry, engineers, and other combat arms, it was oriented towards giving Air Corps officers an operational view of aviation and the other elements of the War Department so that they would not founder at Fort Leavenworth.

Some of the people were not in the air side at all; some of them were Marines and Navy. You learned a little about the Navy, just sort of touching base. It was a much sketchier course than what we had for ground arms, but it was important. They ran the battle of Jutland on the floor in the display room, naval operations room, just as they do at Newport.[lvii]

ACTS, far from being an unavoidable academic grind, was an enjoyable grooming school that all Air Corps pilots wanted to attend.

It was a very interesting place. It was a very pleasant, relaxed year and everybody knew this. I had to live in town as a student and so did a great many other folks, but that didn't make any difference. We had a fine golf course, airplanes to fly, horses to ride (you had to ride[lviii]*), tennis courts, swimming pools, everything! In the first few days they said, "This is a place where we want you to relax and take time off and try to think about what is going on. Get acquainted with your contemporaries, because you are going to be with them for the rest of your service life and here is the place to get to know each other—on the golf course, over in the bar, or wherever." They didn't exactly say it that way, but that was the implication. It was a delightful place to live, really. It was a relatively new post, built in the early 1930's.*[lix]

What fascinated Partridge about ACTS was the emphasis upon using airpower in the macro sense—employing all the "different kinds of aircraft together—I had never been exposed to that."[lx] He thoroughly enjoyed the semi-organized airpower debates in particular: "A lot of rugged individualists on both sides presented their opinions in loud tones, sometimes with profanity. A lot of free-thinking went on in the faculty with people like Fairchild [Gen Muir], Wilson [Maj Gen Donald] and students like Walker [Brig Gen Kenneth], Hansell [Maj Gen Haywood], Snavely, and others who thought in much broader terms than anyone else in the service that I ran into."[lxi] But airpower was primarily considered vis-à-vis traditional Army missions:

We had a course in the solution of problems, given by Colonel Porter [William N.], who served later as chief of chemical warfare. Then there was a cavalryman, an artilleryman, and an infantryman, and they each gave courses in how their organizations

were set up, how you used them, and how you solved problems involving these several weapons. So here we were getting a good course of instruction.[lxii]

Partridge's impression of his student year was that the school was objective, and even though there was a heavy emphasis on bomber operations, contrary views were aired and debated. "They were trying to bring out the point that airpower could be used strategically rather than in support of ground forces. That they [the Air Corps] should be used as a unit, cut loose to do a series of mass employments [sic]. This was stressed by people in the bombardment section and it was the policy being taught at the school."[lxiii] When scholars scrutinize the surviving ACTS records or published works and conclude that the bomber was believed to be the final word in winning the air war, it was not the message Partridge received. "We had people dedicated to the bombing business who presented their case extremely well, and that's what they were supposed to do. If they were better salesmen than someone else, then that was the feeling of the school at the moment. There were a lot of people who did not accept that; I was one of them I guess.[lxiv]

Like many of his ACTS classmates, Partridge found himself bound for Command and General Staff School (CGSC) in the summer of 1937. Thanks to his rural background and cavalry ROTC experience at Norwich, he spent little time at Maxwell on horseback. However the horses weren't there for country club joy rides. "It was so that people who went to Leavenworth wouldn't be completely earthbound—at least they could get as high as a horse. There were a lot of Air Force people who had never been on a horse. At Leavenworth you were sure to be given a horse and told, 'Here's your map, here's your horse, go solve this problem.' The students' tactical problems ranged from

terrain studies, to scouting, and even photo interpretation. But insofar as aviation was concerned, CGSC was as thin on aviation as West Point had been. "They *did* have an air section—a series of lectures on how things were done. However, this was just to indoctrinate the Army people on what they could expect to have happen in the air."[lxv]

Looking back on the course of instruction at CGSC, Partridge marveled that the impending war in Europe received not a single comment. "They never gave us an intelligence briefing; never told us what the Germans were doing over there—air, ground, or anything else. They didn't tell us much about the Spanish war. I just couldn't believe it."[lxvi] What the course of instruction *did* place a premium upon, was staff planning . . . in painful detail.

It was a letdown after going to the Tactical School where they were really using their imaginations and running exercises. They used airfields on Anticosti, the island up in the St. Lawrence River, hither and yon, imaginary airfields—for ferrying aircraft, air defense, and so on. It was a very imaginative course with people like Fairchild teaching. Colonel Wilson—he was a very quiet person; very few ever heard of him—he was head of the air warfare section. This was a forward-looking course based on the technical developments that we could readily see coming. The B-17 was already being flown and they were talking about building other airplanes—faster airplanes. When you got to Leavenworth, they were still marching down the road at 2 miles an hour (laughter). The Germans were already using high-speed tactics, panzer divisions, and mechanized divisions. This wasn't taught at Leavenworth. We had at Maxwell a course in each of the branches of the Army—each of the combat branches. When I got to Leavenworth, the only thing they did was to put them together in divisions and you became General "A"

and they asked "what do you do next after considering the mission?" One of the first things to do was to make an estimate of the situation. I tell you, some of the people who attended that school would sit there from one o'clock in the afternoon until five and would come out with a blank piece of paper. It was incredible, they just couldn't make a decision; they couldn't analyze the various factors. The people who came from the Air Corps Tactical School would sit down and say, "Here is what I have to work with; here is what the enemy has; here is what I'm going to do; and this is what I'm going to do next." Simply because it had been a good course at Maxwell—in ground arms, mind you.[lxvii]

If CGSC was weak on anticipating future threats, it was on a par with ACTS in its failure to address how land power and airpower related to or supported each other. When asked what ACTS taught its students about air support for the Army, Partridge drew a complete blank. "I don't remember that the Army ever said what they wanted—I think they felt that they could take care of themselves with their own weapons—but this was never said. I don't remember any instruction at all about what the air arm would provide by way of close support. This is also why Leavenworth wasn't much; they should have been talking about the kind of support they expected from the Air Force."[lxviii]

The Air Corps Tactical School, Maxwell Field

In view of his fond memories of Maxwell, Partridge was thrilled to be offered a teaching assignment back at ACTS upon graduation from CGSC. As an instructor of pursuit aviation and communications, Partridge found himself working alongside fellow fighter pilots Hoyt Vandenberg and James Parker (later Maj Gen James E.). It is impor-

tant to note however, that Partridge and his pursuit contemporaries saw themselves as pilots who could do it all, and not merely bomber, attack or fighter pilots. Partridge took the time to read every book in the school library on the employment of airpower and actually found himself revisiting *Winged Warfare* by William Bishop. Partridge's independent study led him to the conclusion that the purpose of pursuit aviation was not defensive at all—as the bomber pilots at ACTS were teaching—it was to go out and take control of the air and to deny it to the enemy.[lxix]

Using World War I as a model, Partridge showed his students how the ebb and flow of air control was influenced by the introduction of better weapons, tactics and aircraft design. "We talked about fighters getting control of the air—we [in the pursuit section] always did." Partridge didn't doubt that bombers had the potential to do a great deal of damage to aircraft on the ground, but "when you really want control of the air, you get it with other airplanes used well tactically."[lxx] This brought him into conflict with the theory of Giulio Douhet and the bombardment section, but Partridge didn't feel at all pressured to tow the party line: "They were following the Douhet theory expounded by an Italian and the school authorities really believed in this. It was stressed, but it wasn't controlling—it was just a principle taught there and believed in."[lxxi]

This isn't to say that Partridge rejected *all* of Douhet's ideas. He firmly believed that the bomber *would* always get through. "Somebody is always going to get through, and this was borne out in World War II. We might lose a squadron, but if you had 10 or 100 squadrons of airplanes out, and one gets completely demolished, why the rest of them keep right on going."[lxxii]

It is clear from Partridge's experience at ACTS that airpower theory and doctrine in the Air Corps was far from a consensus. When the GHQ was established by the Baker Board in March 1935, an Air Board was formed to perform three important functions at Maxwell Field in conjunction with ACTS input. The Air Board's mandate included the preparation of doctrinal concepts, equipment evaluations, and to develop an organizational chart for the Army Air Corps.[lxxiii] "Things were done [in the Air Corps as a whole] by one person without the knowledge of other people, and no record made of it, no memorandum of record or anything of this sort." For example, AWPD-1 was written by ACTS instructors for the Air War Plans Division of the General Staff and it asserted that bombers would achieve air superiority and that fighters were defensive.

Wish that I had seen it then (laughter). I came to Washington on 1 October 1941, and that had already been published. It was written by bomber people, Walker, Hansell, George, Anderson [General Samuel E.]—Sorenson was there too, I think—for other bomber people's consumption, and the President. The President had ordered this, you see; this was in response to something he had sent out as instructions—I didn't know what—but that was the first Air War Plan. Just because they say something about fighters that didn't turn out to be just right, why that's a small mistake in such a fine plan. It was a plan to build 50,000 airplanes.[lxxiv]

This type of oligarchic institutional behavior was not unusual in the Air Corps—it was also a characteristic of leadership from the top down in a somewhat freewheeling environment quite unlike other Army branches.

General Arnold was probably the worst one; he just worked in a way that you would not believe. He would pick people and say, "Hey, you go over there and do that," while walking down the hall of the Munitions Building. Let me give you one example. Henry Harms [Brigadier General Henry W.] in late 1940-early 1941—we were walking down the hall of the Munitions Building. He had just been transferred to a base in Arizona to build a flying field—a training field—and he came up to get some money out of buildings and grounds to get going on the construction. Arnold intercepted us in the hallway and said, "Henry, I want you to go up to Newfoundland. We are having trouble up there." [He had just relieved the local commander.[lxxv]*] Henry said, "I just moved; I just got to Phoenix; I'm trying to build a flying field and I am up here to get money for it." Arnold replied, "I don't care what you are doing, you get up there today!" And damned if he didn't—he went up there and stayed two years (laughter), never did go back to his station. How in the hell his station got along, I don't know (laughter). This wasn't the only time this happened; it happened several times. In another case, he happened to light on the chief air surgeon and told him to go straighten out an engine problem (laughter).*[lxxvi]

If leadership, theory and doctrine seemed a little chaotic, the development of technology and the procurement of equipment were also unlike current practice. Partridge believed that there was a significant lack of emphasis on fighter aircraft as the focus on a long-range bomber absorbed institutional energy. Competitive aircraft manufacturers would place technical representatives on Air Corps Fields to pick the brains of military pilots for desired performance characteristics and innovative ideas. They would then send out a prototype for pilots to fly. Partridge felt that Seversky was particularly adept at

this, once providing three different airframes for evaluation on a single occasion. To the best of his recollection, the manufacturers had the initiative.

One of the jobs I had at Maxwell was to be on a three-man board at Wright Field. This happened a couple of times. We went up there and flew the prototypes and decided which we would like to have—which we would recommend to be purchased—and in every case they were. The P-35, P-36, P-40—these turned out to be good airplanes, but they were just a little behind the times. By the time they got into service, the Germans were considerably out in front. So were the Japanese in some respects.[lxxvii]

Things were going even more poorly on the communications front. Fighters were still equipped with high frequency (HF) radios only, and these did not even have crystal control for tuning. Pilots found it frustrating to spend so much time "heads down" trying to tune their radio. "We were struggling . . . what a pain! It was disastrous; people would work on this thing awhile and then they would say 'the hell with it' and go in and land. If they were trying to get the tower, they couldn't—if it rained there was too much static—you couldn't hear a thing. The bombers were better equipped."[lxxviii] VHF radios with four channels weren't installed in fighters until well into the war. "I don't think we had a dozen good communications officers in the whole damn outfit [Air Corps].[lxxix] This vacuum would later come back to haunt him in Korea.

In 1938, President Roosevelt directed that a significant expansion of the Air Corps be undertaken. Partridge was amazed at how quickly the Air Corps grew and at its unexpected ability to maintain traditions. Although there were never more than 4,000 regular

officers during World War Two, there was soon a total of 420,000 officers and 1,800,000 enlisted personnel.

It was obvious to me that there was a war in Europe coming up. Even in 1938 we could see this thing coming just as plain as anything. When it finally broke out, it was just as plain as the nose on your face that the Army Air Corps was much too small to do anything useful on a big scale. As a matter of fact, General Arnold came down to the Air Corps Tactical School and made a speech, and he said, "You damn well better get ready. We went through this way back in World War I. It's going to take an improved training establishment and we need to get out and build the bases right now." I think that this was in June 1939. I remember him making the speech. He went all through the business of getting airplanes in production—just saying we are going to have to do this, not how we are going to do it, but this is what we have to do. Train instructors, get prepared.[lxxx]

In 1939, Partridge was very much intrigued by the implications of the German use of Panzer-Stuka tactics. "An attache told us the sordid details of the Poles getting the hell beat out of them. This seemed very far away to me. We didn't have a Stuka; we didn't have a dive-bomber. We needed one, but we didn't have one."[lxxxi] Perhaps one of the reasons why attack and fighter communications received little or no investment from the Air Corps is because ACTS had no concept of forward air controllers or close air support. "It wasn't taught anywhere as far as I know. This business was copied from the British [later]."[lxxxii] Because ACTS had shifted to a 12-week course and was getting 100 new students every four weeks, Partridge found that he was far too busy teaching to scrutinize developments overseas. Even so, the frenetic activity at Maxwell Field had a silver lin-

ing. "I got to see every senior officer in the air business and a lot of the ground people."[lxxxiii] ACTS had now shifted its emphasis to familiarization with, and employment of the air arm, instead of serving as a CGSC preparatory school. Soon, it couldn't even afford the twelve-week courses.

The Southeast Air Corps Training Command

In 1940, the Southeast Air Corps Training Command was formed and ACTS graduated its last class. "We didn't have enough people to send. We had a large faculty and these people were needed elsewhere. The students couldn't be spared from their regular Air Force duties to go there—we were desperate for experience." Partridge was promoted to major, transferred to the new command at Maxwell, and given a unique assignment that seemed to spring from General Arnold's speech a year earlier. "The job given me was to go out and find places where flying schools could be established. I was given the job—single-handed mind you, just by myself—to go out and make a personal survey of every place that it was proposed we build a flying school. For example, Selma was the nearest one; Craig Field was built."[lxxxiv] Some of the locations were laughably unsuitable, and even though prospective airfields were sponsored by senators and congressmen, Partridge had final authority over their approval. This became a problem quickly as he turned down site after site as unsuitable—to the anger of cities like Birmingham Alabama.

I bucked a little bit, because I couldn't see the big picture. I said, "Look, in Kansas, eastern Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, there's enough room to build all the flying fields that we'll ever need." Finally, this word got to Major General Walter Weaver. He called me in and said, "Sit down, I want to tell you what's going on." Then

he explained the politics of it. There were millions of dollars being spent and they wanted to spread it all across the south and as far north as they dared to go in regards to the weather. Then I began to realize how big this training establishment was going to be. I didn't realize how big the plans were. He was very nice about it.[lxxxv]

On 1 October 1940, Partridge was charged with establishing an advanced single-engine flying school at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. "It started with me (laughter)—it's very interesting. Then I got four officers from Kelly Field. Then we got a few enlisted men, we got a few airplanes, and gradually things started working."[lxxxvi] There were three other schools established on the field simultaneously (on the same day). A bombardier school, a navigator school, and a multi-engine pilot school. Partridge was given no guidelines, no curriculum, and no manuals. He wrote the gunnery manual personally. After six months and one successful graduating class at Barksdale Field, Partridge was ordered to move his entire school over to Craig Field—the site in Selma that he had approved for construction months before. "One day we just flew all of our T-6's over to Craig Field, landed and gave the instructors a chance to go find houses—with preliminary arrangements through the Chamber of Commerce. Then we just transferred the whole outfit out."

I called them all together that day and I said, "Look, you GI's have got to do better. You don't realize that you are about to be squadron and group commanders in no time at all." They looked at me as though I had lost my mind. Then, of course, I went away. The next thing I knew I was over in England in 1944—there they were, group commanders, great![lxxxvii]

Incredibly, Partridge only spent that first night in Selma. The next day, he was sent to Dothan Alabama to start another flying school—but first, he had to build the airfield. Armed with military specifications from Maxwell Field and an Army civil engineer, Partridge set to work. Soon, instructors and students began to arrive, just as before. Some were from the flying school he had left at Selma.

The splitting of training units took place again and again. I learned something about splitting units. The Southeast Training Center took over Gunter Field, which was the municipal airport in Montgomery. It had a very sharp fellow who was very proud of his maintenance organization at Maxwell and he was directed to split half over to Gunter. He did his men a great injustice, which I could see instantly, and so could the men. He kept his good people. He didn't send the noncommissioned officers over there as he should have done. As a consequence, many of the ones who stayed at Maxwell were stuck. They didn't get promoted, but the less competent ones over at Gunter did. I learned from that. Tell the commanding officer to divide his people equally and don't tell him which half that you're going to transfer.[lxxxviii]

War Planning in Washington, DC

As Partridge was about to see the completion of construction and the beginning of flight training in Dothan, he was issued orders to Washington DC and the War Plans Division at Headquarters, Army Air Forces. Partridge modestly asserted that they were looking for "Tactical School types, and I was the one in the least important job." He arrived on October 1, 1941 and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel one month later. "I was assigned to keep my eye on the United States, Hawaii and Panama. I was to answer such questions as 'Do we send a squadron to Midway Island?'[lxxxix] Mostly, I was just

putting out little fires." A big fire erupted while Partridge was shooting quail at Chanute Field with a West Point classmate on the weekend of 7 December. Partridge was surprised that the Japanese would undertake such an operation, but he wasn't surprised by the results.

We were all very disturbed about the planning for Hawaii, and this had been reported by the Air Inspector, whose name was Colonel George [A.] Whatley. He was a classmate of mine in the flying school. As you can see, here was another close relationship; people I dealt with—a lot of them many times—were someone you went through flying school or West Point with. Whatley had been out there—he was out there when I got to Washington in October; he came back in November, early November. He went to General Arnold and said, "General, I have a bad situation in Hawaii. They're planning for sabotage rather than an air attack, and as a result, they are concentrating their airplanes and preventing people from moving around on the base during the alert. They had a practice while I was there. What do they do? They took all the airplanes and put them in a pile almost, and then they took the officers and enlisted personnel downtown for patrol, to control the civilian population." They never did get it changed.[xc]

In January 1941, Partridge and many of the personnel working in the Munitions Building—the War Department Headquarters—were inoculated with a bad batch of Yellow Fever serum that ultimately killed over 500 Army personnel. "I was in Walter Reed about a week or ten days and my only consolation was that the man who okayed the vaccine was in the next bed, and he was in desperate shape. It was kept pretty quiet then. It really decimated the Munitions Building."[xci]

After recovery, Partridge's "fire-fighting" in the War Plans Division ended. He was promoted in March 1942 and assigned as a member of the War Department General Staff to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff Strategic Committee. He replaced Albert Wedemeyer (later Lieutenant General and commander in China) and worked alongside one representative from each branch of the armed forces—all of whom would achieve high rank.

The first thing I ran into when I joined it in March 1942, they were busily engaged in pushing a plan to invade France. This plan had been laid down with the British reluctantly taking part, because they didn't believe at all in a plan to invade France in 1943. I didn't like the plan to start off with; I thought that 1943 was an absolutely impossible date. They sold this to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Here again, the British were saying "No, it isn't possible," but for planning purposes they accepted it.[xcii]

Partridge became acquainted with the long-range thinking, goals and objectives of Chief of Staff Marshall and General Eisenhower (who then headed the War Plans Division of the General Staff) over the next nine months. However, once again, force requirements would see him quickly promoted and transferred. In December, he would receive the star of a Brigadier General (slightly over a year before he had been a Major) and sent to command the New York Air Defense Wing. This was an assignment that nearly ended his career and led to his most fortuitous position en route to his four-star destiny.

Becoming a Bomber Baron; the Doolittle Years

Upon arriving for duty in January 1943, Partridge was sent to Orlando Florida to attend a three-week classified school on radar principles and employment—an essential primer for air defense. Upon returning to Mitchel Field, he set out to inspect and get acquainted with each of his subordinate units. No sooner had that been accomplished, the

Inspector General of the Army, Major General Virgil L. Peterson, arrived at General Marshall's direction.[xciii] Partridge's boss, Major General James E. Chaney, as the Commanding General of the 1st Air Force, had the misfortune to report to two bosses (Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum—Commanding General of the First Army—and General Hap Arnold) who had issued contradictory orders. General Drum directed Chaney to conduct reconnaissance and other air defense missions, while General Arnold ordered him to conduct training, first and foremost. Partridge was present when the Inspector General asked his boss the question that got him fired:

I hadn't had much chance to do more than go around and look at the units by that time. I was not too well informed, but at least I knew that you couldn't do training and defense at the same time. Chaney should have known this too, but he sat at the table in General Drum's headquarters and said, "No, these two missions can be carried out simultaneously—no trouble." Wrong, and he was gone right there. Peterson gave him a funny look as I recall, but then he very honestly went around through the command to see what was going on, who was in charge, what the policies were, and so on. They tried to break Chaney back to a colonel. General Arnold issued the orders. He stayed on awhile and then he retired. Brigadier General Taylor [Willis R.]—who had First Fighter Command under Chaney—was doing a fine job; he was busted back to Colonel, sent to Panama and was killed in an airplane accident. I was next down the line, and they were going to bust me back to my permanent grade, probably major or captain. Stratemeyer [Lieutenant General George E.], who was assisting Arnold, went in and said, "Look here, for heaven's sake, Partridge just got up there; he hasn't had time to get settled in his chair yet." Arnold apparently said, "Okay, get him the hell out of there."[xciv]

Providence smiled on Partridge again as a call went out for a tactically proficient operations officer to assume duties with the Northwest African Air Force. As General Craigie assumed Partridge's Air Defense post, General Stratemeyer sent a message recommending Partridge to General Doolittle.

Doolittle didn't know me; I had never met him. He got a message saying, "An old fellow named Partridge is available. Would you like him for an operations officer?" Vandenberg was the chief of staff for Doolittle in Africa at that time and he said, "Take him, he's a fighter man; take him." So Doolittle did, not knowing anything about me at all. We got along extremely well; it turned out to be a very good assignment for me. I couldn't have had a better one.[xcv]

Partridge arrived on 23 April 1943 and liked Doolittle from the start because they thought alike and shared leadership styles. "He is the kind of fellow who says, 'This is your job, it's up to you, do it.' He wouldn't put up with people who weren't trying, but if you failed at something, or if something came along that you didn't know about, he understood this."[xcvi] Partridge and Doolittle flew all over the theater together in his consecutive duties as chief of staff of the 12th Bomber Command and of the 15th Air Force. Nevertheless, Partridge was surprised by the speed with which victory arrived in Africa. "I didn't realize that it was going to stop so soon; I thought that it was going to stop about August or September. We had a little pool on when the Germans would finally surrender and it turned out to be May instead of August. In other words, the war was much farther along than I realized."[xcvii]

Although the German Air Force in Africa was eliminated by the time of his arrival, Partridge flew combat missions with every unit and in every type of aircraft, B-26's, B-

17's, B-24's, B-25's, and even flew night missions in British Wellingtons. He recalled that Sir Arthur Tedder was the final authority for specific targets. "He's a great fellow; I liked him." Partridge also like the people he worked with and the architecture of the command structure.

General Spaatz was in charge of the Northwest African Strategic Air Force. Joe Cannon had the Twelfth Air Force—the tactical part of it—and Doolittle had the Fifteenth—bombers. I came over and became operations officer and Vandenberg was both chief of staff and deputy commander. We were not in the close air support business. The Army learned the truth of a great concept in their battles all the way across from Cairo. This is when they had the tactical air forces divided and could not use them effectively en masse. Whereas the British on the other side had theirs under a tactical air commander and did use theirs well. People forget how big North Africa is; it's 1400 miles from Tunis to Cairo—a line just west of Cairo—right on around to Tunis. They [the British] were doing well in the coordination of their air and ground forces. This was a great example to our Army. "Ike" put all the tactical air under one commander—Cannon—and all the strategic forces under Spaatz, and away we went. We did better after that. The Army would like to split up the air and assign it right down to the battalion—as they do their artillery. This is not a problem anymore—Abrams [Creighton W. Jr.] is absolutely sold.[xcviii]

It was in Africa that Partridge learned the critical value of intelligence in combat. "I learned—it took me just one day—that you can't do anything without the complete support and confidence of your intelligence section. It didn't take long, because when you arrive in theater, you know zero about what's going on." With photographic intelli-

gence support, Partridge and his squadrons flew missions into Sicily, Sardinia, Naples and other targets on the Italian mainland. "Some places had [defensive] fighters, some places had antiaircraft, some places didn't have anything." One day—after the allies had established security in southern Italy—Doolittle directed him to collect some intelligence of his own:

"Take a B-25, go over and take a look at the airfields and figure out which ones we should occupy first, where are the areas we should build some airstrips, and come back and tell me what the score is." So I set off bright and early one morning and had just got opposite Sicily when one of my two engines ceased to operate. I flew this B-25 into an airfield—not Palermo—but another one nearby. I couldn't believe my eyes. The Italian Air Force had decided the day before that they wanted to fly out all the airplanes they could get their hands on and take them to Sicily and turn them over to us. Beautiful airplanes, brand-new, never been flown at all, never in combat. Here they were, and I wasn't going to get to the mainland of Italy that day because it was hard to get mechanics. That's when I had one of the most interesting experiences in my whole life. Somebody said to me, "If you want to know about the airfields in Italy, why don't you go around and talk to the Italians?" I said, "Well, I never thought of that" (laughter). So, they arranged for a general, several colonels, lieutenant colonels, and majors to come and sit around a table with me, and I started at the south end [of Italy] going around. "Now, the field at such-and-such, how long is that?" The general would say "2,000 meters," and the colonel would say "no" in Italian and correct the figure. I had an interpreter and he couldn't keep up with the conversation. Then the officers would work their way down to the majors and we would settle on a figure—or at least that there was

a field there anyway (laughter). I finally got my airplane fixed and flew back to Tunis. What a day! It showed that there wasn't much discipline in the Italian Air Force and that senior officers didn't know what in the hell was going on. They probably had never been there. They weren't flyers in the sense that we were flyers. They didn't get up in their own airplanes and fly around and look at things. They stayed on the ground out of trouble and they were reasonably fat and happy-looking (laughter). What a day that was! I have never forgotten it. But the Italian Air Force was ineffectual, in my opinion.[xcix]

Partridge observed the invasion of Sicily, operations of the Combat Cargo Command, P-40 fighter operations in the Mediterranean and heavily contested bombing operations in northern Italy. However, the most hateful military event to watch was a glider operation. "The British had a great big one called the Horsa—I don't know how they got the people in there. It would have taken a lever to get me in one (laughter). I took a very dim view of this thing."[c] He had quite the opposite opinion of airborne operations however. He paid close attention to the intense planning required for a successful "vertical envelopment," and would find that his interest served him very well in Korea.[ci]

Partridge learned a great deal about the prosecution of an air war under Doolittle—both operationally and administratively. "It was a well-coordinated heavy bomber—B-17's and B-24's—and light bomber—B-25's, B-26's, P-38's—effort. I don't think that there was anything especially radical or new about it. It was just a question of figuring out what the intelligence people wanted, what targets you should attack in the daytime and what targets you should attack at night.[cii] Things were going so well that, at the end of 1943, Doolittle sent him on another solo mission:

He said, "I want you to go back to Washington and I want you to check over the people they are sending over here as commanders. You know them; I don't. Whatever you say about them is what I'm going to say. Look into the winter flying equipment." He also wanted 12 dozen double damask napkins for the mess—I have never forgotten this—"and go by Harry's and buy some liquor" (laughter). So, I filled up the airplane with liquor (laughter). He had told me, "Work to conclusion; whatever you decide on the spot, put my okay on it and that's that." Now, you don't get a boss like that very often.[ciii]

Upon returning to theater, Partridge was surprised to learn that General Arnold had decided to exchange the commanders of the 8th and 15th Air Forces. Partridge believes that General Eaker was unhappy about the switch, but he made it a point to say nothing to Eaker about the subject. "I didn't think it was my business."[civ]

Arnold got permission to switch the two commanders. I don't know why. Had he not switched, things might have gone along just fine, but he had a feeling apparently, that Doolittle was doing extremely well in the Mediterranean in achieving the objectives and cutting down losses. In Africa, bomber force losses were less than ⅒ of one percent per mission. Whereas, out of England, against very severe opposition, Eaker was taking losses which—particularly at that time, October, November 1943—were just tremendous. In October they lost 14 percent of all the airplanes they sent out to enemy action. They didn't count those that cracked up at home and went into the Channel, but they published the figure of 14.7 percent. Arnold got pretty upset about these losses; we weren't manufacturing that many airplanes to maintain this. He came by on his way to Cairo and talked to Doolittle and decided later to send Eaker to Italy where we had moved by that

time. I don't think he [Arnold] said anything to Doolittle except "get up there and get going."[cv]

Doolittle chose to leave the command structure of the 15th Air Force in place to make the transition easier for Eaker, and only took his aide and Partridge with him to England. On New Year's day of 1944, Doolittle and his deputy commander arrived to assume command of the 8th Air Force and began to make "major changes."

We had been there a few days, not too many at that, when he [Doolittle] said, "Come on, we are going over to the Fighter Command" and off we went. The general over there, Kepner [Lieutenant General William E.], was in his office and had a couple of people around him. We started talking—I was doing most of the listening—and there was a sign on the wall that read, "The mission of the fighters is to bring the bomber formations back intact." Doolittle looked at that and said, "Bill, I want you to take that sign down, and from now on, you have a different mission." He said, "I want you to cut yourself loose from that bomber stream. I want you to go find the German fighters and destroy them. You will protect the bomber formation by doing that—we have to get control of the air, that's all there is to it. Go after the German fighters, wherever they are; on the ground, in the air, anyplace." Sure enough, this is what happened. We started shooting down fighters, a hundred a day. We got such good control of the air that the bombers could operate relatively unimpeded. That's what we had been doing in the Mediterranean Theater. Doolittle just brought the idea along with him.[cvi]

Doolittle immediately sent Partridge to Northern Ireland to evaluate the 8th Air Force's training bases under the command of Brigadier General Edmund Hill. Eaker had established the fighter and bomber schools there in the early days of the air war when it

wasn't at all clear that England would be safe from invasion. "I went over and took a look at the place and said, 'Boss, do away with it" and he did. Hill was furious. I don't know how many people—we must have saved at least 10,000 or 15,000 people (laughter), and about five air bases and the delay of several months in getting people from the United States to the operational units."[cvii] Partridge was a stickler for efficiency in all areas, and as soon as he felt that he had ironed out the most pressing of administrative problems, he began flying combat missions again—but not in bombers as senior (bomber command) officers did.

Partridge had a P-47 and later, a P-51 assigned for his personal use.[cviii] When he became aware that some groups had much higher casualty statistics than others, he began the habit of accompanying the bombers to their targets in Germany (and elsewhere) to evaluate their formations and collect his own bomb damage assessments.

We fought a major battle every day—every day you could get there—that was almost every day. They would take off, circle over England, assemble, and each unit would have specific times to cross their coast-out-point to be in that column. They would climb at 150 knots indicated, cruise at 150, come down at 150—this is a B-17 operation. Some of the units flew a beautiful formation, and some of them didn't do well at all. The German fighters would cruise up and down the column until they found a unit that wasn't in good formation; then they would attack. The 100th Group, which was in my organization, the 3rd Air Division, was one of these. They had a bunch of prima donnas for awhile. Of course, they went out of formation. They went into Germany one day in early 1944; they started with 12 and only one came back. Another time, only two came back. I didn't have to worry about these fancy aircrews after that because they were in Germany, in a

prison camp, most of them. You have to know what's going on where the action is. There is no use flying around in England. In the Mediterranean, I went in the bombers all the time into combat. I didn't bother with watching the formation because it wasn't very important, but it was awfully important up in England. I finally rigged up a camera so I could fly up alongside the formation and take a picture. Sometimes you have a hard time finding the airplanes in the photo because they were so far apart.[cix]

Partridge didn't ask about restrictions on flying, because he knew that General Eisenhower had nearly fired Doolittle in Africa because he had been flying too often. "Ike told him he would either have to be a pilot or be a general. He had a problem with Ike from then on for quite awhile, and Ike saw that he was doing a wonderful job and things sort of smoothed out."[cx] Nevertheless, the word finally got around that Partridge might be anyplace during a mission—even over the target.[cxi] This was a great relief to General Doolittle when the 8th and 9th Air Force bombers began flying close air support missions.[cxii] When Partridge was promoted to major general in May 1944 he was given command of the 3rd Bomb Division, which was already a very proud outfit thanks to the superb leadership of his predecessor Major General Curtiss LeMay.[cxiii] With nothing to fix in terms of relative bombing accuracy, he gradually began to assume the role of a tactical air controller (after witnessing a friendly fire incident at St. Lo when bombers were sent in perpendicular to the forward edge of the battle area).

This wasn't their fault dammit. I was up there watching as usual, waiting for our own [8th Air Force] bombers to come along. But these were 9th Air Force bombers—medium bombers—and pretty soon the smoke obscured the road they were supposed to cross before bombing. I watched this going on. These were pattern bombs. The next time we

had to bomb in support of the front lines, they changed the system so that we went to the west and turned up the battle line until you got past the target—ten, fifteen, twenty minutes or something—a long time, anguish. I was up there in a P-47 watching what was going on and waiting for our people to come along. This was over at Caen, which is to the east. Here they came; you had no trouble finding them at all. There was just anti-aircraft fire all over the place. One of our airplanes got hit and it fell out of formation. It started a great big spiral, people were jumping out occasionally and down they went in their parachutes. Do you know where that damn thing landed? It landed right in the British ammunition dump! It blew and fired and it blew and it fired. About this time along came General Old [later, Lieutenant General Archie J.], leading his wing. I was flying out there about 1,000 yards or so watching, a good formation. I was feeling pretty good about this. We had only lost one airplane and we had come through all this anti-aircraft fire. All of a sudden I heard this anguished voice which is typical Old, "Ye gods, dammit don't shoot at him—he's the boss!" (Laughter) Here I was, flying right along parallel to them; they could see the tracers—I couldn't, they were coming at me (laughter). I called him later and said, "Say, your gunners aren't very good. You had better give them some practice."[cxiv]

On some targets in France, Partridge felt that he had to go along in an airborne controller capacity because of last minute changes to the schedule during the night. On one particularly memorable occasion, all the aircraft had been loaded with 500-pound bombs for a mission into Germany. At midnight, the target was changed to Bordeaux France and the load-out was 100-pound bombs. When he called each of his wing commanders to see if it was feasible for them to reconfigure the aircraft, some said "yes" and others said

"no." All said that they didn't have photos of the target. After calling down to 8th Air Force headquarters, Partridge learned that General Doolittle was unaware of the mission. Major General Fredrick Anderson had authorized the new target because the Army had cornered German troops on the tip of the peninsula.

I said, "My goodness." Doolittle didn't know anything about this and I was up at the 3rd Division, 80 miles away. I got my P-51 out and joined the column. I went down and made sure I knew where the target was and waited and waited and waited. Finally our bombers came along. They did bomb the right place, there's no doubt about it, but they could have bombed over—say we had cloud cover for a moment. You could carry your bombs over three or four miles and drop them on Bordeaux—right in the middle of the city. This didn't happen, but this is an example of how it happened that I flew quite a few missions—to make sure that we were bombing the right target in friendly territory. This is sort of the start of airborne controller business in my experience. If they had been going astray, I would have been working on them. I wasn't trying to be too obvious; I was just there against any contingency that I could take care of from another airplane. Only the commanders knew that I was there.[cxv]

To his knowledge, only Partridge was doing this.[cxvi] He enjoyed superb supply and maintenance support that freed him from the details that would absorb a great deal of his attention five years later. "The spirit was wonderful. Everybody was trying to do the best they could to provide operational aircraft and they broke their backs to do it." As Commander of the 3rd Bomber Division, he had 17 bomb groups—all B-17's—over-strength by fifty percent. "They were supposed to have 35 airplanes, and they had 55 or 60."[cxvii] Despite his desire to be everywhere at once, one of his units still managed to get lost in

weather only to find a clear patch of air over a large ball bearing factory. They decided to bomb it visually and totally destroyed it. Unfortunately, it was a *Swiss* ball bearing plant.

That little piece of land had a city in it, and they just plastered it. The Swiss thought that we did it on purpose. General Doolittle had already just been eaten out by Spaatz [General Carl A.] for bombing the wrong place. Here he had to go again and explain to his boss that he had just bombed the wrong target again! The unit came home proud as punch (laughter) with pictures to prove it.[cxviii]

On D-Day, Partridge jumped in a P-38 and watched the whole spectacle from the air. "The Germans didn't have much chance. Had they put anybody up, they would have been shot down in short order. We had enough airplanes to overhaul any force the Germans could put up.[cxix] The fact that Partridge was flying so many missions in his P-47 and P-51 is remarkable because Partridge recollects that German fighter opposition never ended.

I was wandering along, minding my own business, around 1 May 1945, and the Germans put up a tremendous effort using jets—and we had P-51's. I saw something go flashing through one of our bomber formations—I was looking and I thought that I was seeing things. It was an ME-262. It went "zoom" right down, a pretty steep dive right through the formation. Then I began to wonder what was going on. I realized they were jet airplanes, but I didn't know where they were coming from or where they were going after they just went through once. They misused them something awful. They have very slow acceleration unless you dive with them. They could have shot down a lot of our bombers, but they were so inexperienced with jets. What they did was dive and then pull up, and went up around 35,000-37,000 feet. The P-51's climbed like mad, dropped their

tanks and went way up. When these fellows slowed up at the top, the P-51's were equal to them and shot them down, one after the other, over a hundred of them on that day, on that mission. It was not very deep in Germany either, over by Hanover someplace. The Germans were never out of the [fighter] business. They were terribly handicapped because we had control of their air. They couldn't do what they wanted to, and we could. Their technology was ahead of ours. We had intelligence on them, that they [the ME-262's] were coming along and to be looking for them. [cxx]

Partridge was a zealous innovator and, because it was wartime, he did not feel even mildly encumbered by any rule that stood in the way of a good idea. During regular lunches with Doolittle and Spaatz, (who Partridge reports were "great friends") he felt that he had 100% support for his ideas. "I found better ways to put the bombs in our B-17's and put slings on them, and we could get 2,000 extra pounds of bombs. We overloaded our B-17's to get 8,000 pounds aboard and we were only supposed to carry 6,000. We were dropping bombs like frantics [sic], and a lot of times they were bringing in the bombs from the port to the air bases and using them the same day or the day after."[cxxi] In the final analysis, Partridge always had the bombs, fuel, equipment, and the secure airfields he needed to prosecute the mission so that virtually all of his attention could be focused on operational considerations. The British were responsible for air defense and, though they occasionally took a shot at returning American aircraft, they didn't otherwise have much to do where Partridge's B-17's were located.

Occasionally somebody [German aircraft] would come over, but mostly they went to London. We had air raids in London—quite a few I was in the midst of. If I happened to be in London, I used to go out and watch to see if I could see any bombers. One morning

after a raid, I walked out and saw how much more iron was laying in the streets that hadn't been there the day before—and I quit that! (Laughter) It was stupid standing out there in the street with no helmet or anything.[cxxii]

Though he was incautious with his own life, Partridge was intolerant of unnecessary risk to his men. Using a master-bomber straight-in pattern bombing technique established by General LeMay, his division would endure slightly higher losses that other outfits, but they also documented greater accuracy.[cxxiii] Partridge would also not consider the political rationale for targets (such as Dresden) or objectives such as "unconditional surrender." He personally considered population bombing to be "useless, useless, foolishness" and felt the same about "unconditional surrender," but he kept such views to himself until late in life. He believed so completely in civilian political authority, that it never occurred to him to lose faith.

Orders are to bomb the city—you bomb the city. You are not supposed to know all the reasons why you should bomb that particular place at that time. Decisions to bomb are sometimes political decisions and sometimes military. When you get to bombing populations, you are in the political side of the house, in my opinion. If the powers say bomb the city, you bomb the city. Places like Hamburg, gee, we burned that down to the ground practically.[cxxiv]

After the German surrender in May of 1945, Partridge put as many of his staff as he could in a B-17 and made a low altitude tour of Germany for six hours. In combat, he had earned the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, four Air Medals, and decorations from the Belgians, British, Polish and French. He had heard that General Doolittle was going to be taking the 8th Air

Force with new personnel and new B-29's to the Far East and asked to go with him. When it was time to leave England, Doolittle, Partridge, Partridge's son, and some friends flew around the world in a B-17.[cxxv]

Back in the United States, Partridge took a weeklong victory tour of the United States with Doolittle and General George Patton. The purpose was to keep people motivated for the continuing fight in the Far East. Afterwards, as Doolittle assembled the new headquarters in Colorado Springs, Partridge traveled to Randolph Field and learned to fly B-29's. He had never seen one, and was unimpressed with its performance and reliability.[cxxvi] Yet, happy to be serving as Doolittle's deputy again, they began ferrying the lead elements of their outfit to Guam at the end of July.

Doolittle remained on Guam with his headquarters under General Spaatz's US Army Strategic Air Forces, while Partridge continued on to Okinawa.[cxxvii] He arrived there on 4 August 1945, with as many B-29's as there was room for. This was a month of surprises for Partridge. "I got a message from Doolittle, who was in Guam, saying 'I'm going home.' Somebody in Washington decided that he had enough honors poured on him, so he was told to go home. He just took off for home, and there I was; I had an air force on my hands."[cxxviii] Partridge had an air force that was two days away from being ready to fly combat missions when the second atomic bomb was dropped. "They were busy getting the people assembled and the airplanes checked over and so on, and the war stopped before they could run a mission."[cxxix] If Partridge was surprised by the precipitous end of the war, the rapid, piece-meal disintegration of his command was nearly as attention-grabbing.

We began to lose our mechanics, and if anybody wanted to fly, he'd better watch out, because the airplanes were not being maintained up to the proper standard. If the officers wanted to fly, they had to get out and work on the airplanes. The standard practice had been that you would fly the airplanes out in case of typhoons. We couldn't have anyway; we just didn't have the wherewithal. I don't think that there was a real master plan. The units were depleted as individuals, 2, 5, 10, 20, would go off on an airplane and the next day some more would go away. Pretty soon you didn't have enough people to take care of the equipment you had on hand.[cxxx]

General Spaatz went home and Partridge found himself reporting to General Nathan Twining at the Twentieth Air Force headquarters on Guam. In December, Partridge too was ordered out. He turned over the 8th Air Force to his chief of staff and West Point classmate, General Pat Timberlake (not to be confused with General Edward J. Timberlake, who would serve as his deputy during the Korean War). Partridge was on his way to Headquarters, Army Air Forces as assistant deputy chief of staff for operations. In January, at the "low point of personnel resources,"[cxxxi] he would find himself sorting out the mess that the Army Air Force had become in just a few short months.

Conclusion

Partridge spent over three years at the Air Corps Tactical School in either a student or instructor capacity, and was intimately familiar with the Air Corps' "school solution" vis-à-vis airpower. Under the tutelage of aviation pioneer Jimmy Doolittle (who spent most of the thirties working as a civilian for the Shell Oil Corporation), he was exposed to a non-institutional perspective that embraced the lessons of the British and encouraged open thinking. This environment led him back to the institutional conviction

that control of the air was indeed the sine qua non of war and that some airborne weapons would always get through.

Partridge believed that doctrine and dogma were nearly synonyms. He was convinced that aircraft were primarily offensive weapons, that the air defense mission should be dominated by surface fire, and that airpower should be employed in a complementary, but independent fashion in coordination with other services. He placed a high priority on military intelligence. Effective intelligence enabled the direction of efficient air operations, and airpower serves the intelligence cycle through targeting, collection of information, and dissemination of processed intelligence. Finally, Partridge understood all too well that people are not machines and that humans must be led. To an uncommon degree—even in the midst of many outstanding leaders—Partridge did this from the front.

During the decade between 1936 and 1946, Pat Partridge would be promoted from captain to major general and received uncommon freedom to study airpower theory and to operationally explore doctrinal propositions. Partridge did not regard himself as a "fighter pilot," a "bomber baron," or any other subset of his operational art. He was an airman who took a macro view of the tools of his trade and believed that every scenario demanded a unique and flexible recipe for success. Partridge actually maintained few fixed predispositions regarding airpower and was forever asking himself: "How can I best accomplish my mission with what I have? We tried everything that you could think of—that *we* could think of anyhow—and it was very interesting to watch."[cxxxii] This attitude was to prove essential to the successful prosecution of America's first limited war.

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